

Michael F. Easley  
Governor



State of North Carolina  
Office of the Governor

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**GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES NEARLY \$16 MILLION IN AID FOR FARMERS TO COVER  
CROP LOSSES FROM 2004 HURRICANES**

*Grants Are Part of the 'Operation Brighter Day' Relief Program*

**RALEIGH** - Gov. Mike Easley today announced that the state has mailed \$15.8 million in disaster-assistance grants to farmers who suffered crop losses in the hurricanes of 2004. More than 1,300 checks were sent today for crop-disaster assistance under the Governor's Operation Brighter Day hurricane recovery program. Today's payment is the first phase in the distribution of more than \$26.3 million in crop aid that is being made available to farmers.

"This aid will help our farmers offset the losses they suffered from the hurricanes," said Easley. "It is an important step in completing the recovery process."

Under the Hurricane Relief Act of 2005, the General Assembly appropriated \$11.7 million for agriculture-related losses, including damaged farmland, farm structures, equipment, crops and commercial fishing and aquaculture operations. Fifty counties were eligible for assistance under the program. The bulk of that appropriation, \$6.3 million, was designated for crop losses.

In October, Easley reallocated \$20 million in Operation Brighter Day funds to address the crop losses suffered by producers of Christmas trees, nursery stock, sod and similar crops that were not covered by the original appropriation.

"The 2004 hurricane season dealt a huge blow to North Carolina farmers and their communities," said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. "This assistance will help them continue to recover from these devastating storms."

In addition to crop-loss assistance, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is continuing to issue checks to help farmers with the cost of removing debris from farmland, repairing fences and conservation structures, and restoring damaged farmland. To date, the department has distributed \$975,000 of the \$3.3 million allocated for this work, and will continue to issue grants as it processes additional data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency.

The department also has distributed \$1.3 million to help farmers repair or replace damaged farm structures and equipment, and more than \$645,000 to assist with commercial fishing and aquaculture losses.

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